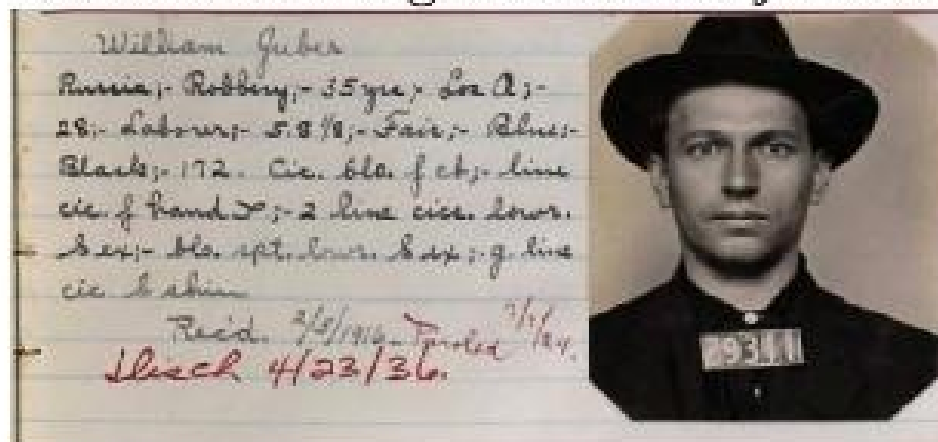


The Home Saving Bank robbery, 1915



A short history of the robbery of a branch of the Home Saving Bank in Los Angeles in 1915 and its aftermath, by the Black Rose Anarchist Federation.

On August 20, 2015 three men entered the Boyle Heights branch of the Home Savings Bank located at 2002 E. First Street. With guns drawn, the men seized over \$2,400. During the robbery a gun battle ensued and one of the robbers was allegedly shot. The men hijacked a vehicle and were able to get away.

The three men were allegedly three Russian anarchists, Gregory Chesalkin (aka George Nelson), Charles Bonhoff and William Huber. The men were members of the Union of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada (UORWC), an anarchist federation founded in New York in 1908. It promoted armed warfare against the state and capitalism and considered itself anarchist-communist. The men had allegedly robbed the bank with the intent of sending the money to help fund the revolutionary movement in Russia.

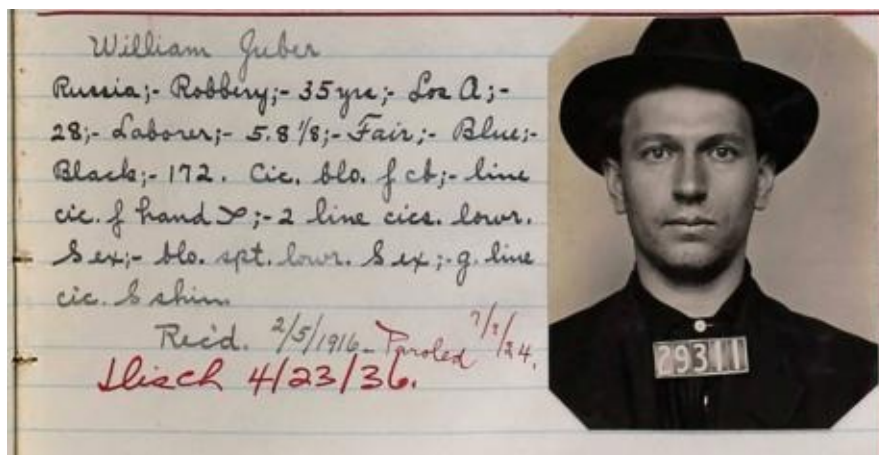
The LAPD increased their patrols under the suspicion that the men would strike again in the Boyle Heights area. Local newspapers reported the police were hot on the trail of the culprits and would soon be captured. Police were unaware the three men had left town and were headed to San Francisco.

However, the man's time on the run would be short-lived when Fisher was arrested on September 11, 1915 in San Francisco after visiting a doctor to have his wound examined by a doctor. Once captured, police say he confessed and informed the police where Chesallin (aka Nelson) was hiding.

Later allegations of torture would be laid against the police causing suspicion as to whether the information was freely given or coerced. Juber would also later deny making the confession. Instead he claimed that he was hired by the three robbers to drive them to San Francisco and was unaware of the crime for which they were accused.

Police attempted to arrest Chesalkin in his room at the boardinghouse where he was staying with Juber. However, this resulted in a 7-hour shootout between the anarchist and over fifty police. According to news reports, Chesalkin took his own life rather than allowing himself to be arrested. Juber would also make the claim that there wasn't a sensational gun battle between Nelson and the police, but rather they killed him in cold blood.

Police now began to piece together the relationship between Chesalkin and Juber in hopes of finding the third man, Charles Boutoff. Also arrested in connection to the robbery were William Calish and Mary Sigal. Calish lived with the three men at 1184 N. Virgil Street and was a childhood friend of Juber. Calish



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and Juber were both born in Odessa, Russia and came to the US together seven years prior. Calish has come to Los Angeles from Seattle just weeks before the robbery.

Police also detained Fannie Gomberg. It was alleged that the men, along with others who were detained, lived in a boardinghouse on 360 ½ Clarence Street in the Boyle Heights area. It has yet to be confirmed which location was accurate or whether they had lived at these locations at different times. Gomberg, Calish and Sigol were eventually released after questioning. Juber was found guilty and sentenced to 35

years in prison.

Boutoff was never captured. However, police believe that Boutoff was actually Vladimir Osokin. Osokin was an anarchist who had been living in the United States since 1908 under the alias of Phillip Ward. He had spent over eight years in Tsarist prisons and in exile in Siberia before coming to the US. He came to

Los Angeles where he joined the Los Angeles Russian Relief Committee. (This might also be the Russian Aid Society, a small anarchist aid organization active in LA at the time.) Boutoff was also a member of the UORW.

In early 1916 he went to San Francisco to help organize Russian strikers at the Union Iron Works. While in San Francisco he also worked with the Volanta Anarchist Group.

On May 26th, 1916, a San Francisco police officer stopped Osokin after being suspected of trying to pass counterfeit money. An altercation took place leaving the officer shot. He would later die from his wounds.

Police later found Osokin barricaded in a boathouse shack on the waterfront.

During a 30-minute gun battle, police riddled the shack with bullets mortally wounded the anarchist.

Before dying Osokin wrote letters apologizing to his mother for his passing and also leaving another statement that ended with "I am not a bandit, but an anarchist communist." His body was later found in a pool of blood.

John Mass, a LA mechanic, identified Osokin's body. However, Frank Matsuyama, an employee of the garage where the Nelson-Boutoff-Juber gang stored their vehicle, also identified him as Charles Boutoff.

Police felt this identification was further supported by the discovery of several newspaper articles regarding the Chesalkin shootout in Osokin's home.

Osokin's funeral was sponsored four anarchist organizations. His wife, Anna Stone, who was being sought after by police, gave a eulogy for her husband. She stated that he died "as a true anarchist should die, opposing the system of oppression."

Taken from [here](#)